



April 24, 2013

Chairman Greg Walden  
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology  
Committee on Energy and Commerce

Ranking Member Anna Eshoo  
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology  
Committee on Energy and Commerce

RE: Lifeline Recipient Stories About the Importance of the Lifeline Program

Dear Chairman Walden, Ranking Member Eshoo, Members of the Subcommittee on Communications and Technology:

I am the New Initiatives Director for Springwire, a national non-profit organization that provides free voicemail and information services to more than 50,000 low-income or homeless individuals in 40 U.S. cities. On behalf of the 1,400 social service agencies in our network, I am writing to show my strong support for the Lifeline program as a vital, effective tool in our national fight against poverty.

Basic phone service is a necessity for people living in poverty – you need a phone to find a job, access social services, health care and emergency services, and to maintain a connection with family members and others who can help. Without Lifeline, a large number of people who need phone service will go without it, and their chances for employment, housing and stability will be significantly diminished. A Lifeline phone is a cost-effective way for people to become *more* self-reliant, and *less* reliant on the social safety net. I urge the Subcommittee to support Lifeline as an important tool for fighting poverty.

Attached are transcripts of voice messages received from low-income or homeless citizens who use Lifeline phones, and want Congress to understand how valuable the program is to them in their efforts to rise out of poverty. These respondents are clients of our organization, from Houston, Tulsa, Seattle and Portland (Oregon); each was sent a voice message on April 23 informing them of the subcommittee meeting regarding Lifeline, and asked to respond with stories about how Lifeline has been valuable to them. While the transcripts are compelling, the voices are even more powerful.

Thank you for your consideration, and for your support for effective tools like Lifeline.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads 'Steve Albertson'.

Steve Albertson  
Springwire New Initiatives Director  
[stevea@springwire.us](mailto:stevea@springwire.us) / 206-441-4239

2901 Third Avenue, Ste 100 Seattle, WA 98121  
T 206.441.7872 • [info@springwire.us](mailto:info@springwire.us) • [www.springwire.us](http://www.springwire.us)

## Facilitating Self-Sufficiency

I have a son that serves in the U.S. army and he's been in for about 2 years. Without this phone service there is no way I would be able to correspond with him in any way because I have no landline service. My son depends on that communication and I depend on it from him to check on his well-being. Even a second young man that is in his barrack is another one of my "sons." We started to communicate together by phone when I speak to my son he chimes in and goes, "Hi mom!" and I go, "Hi son!" so now I have two sons in that are in the service and it is so important as they serve the nation and us that we communicate with them and support them.

It also has helped me go in to the resource bank at the 2-1-1 line and request services to stay in my home. I've rented a home for almost two years. It has helped me to communicate the housing authority in my local area, it has helped me to request emergency information for a 3 day pay or vacate that was a mistake but they allowed me to get the assistance because the agency made a mistake. I was charged for it and there was no way for me to pay that in arrears based on that mistake and the agency helped me. Just all types of things. When you find out that these services are going to be restricted or cut off it makes all things come to the surface. I couldn't expound any more on how helpful this is.

It is so helpful to me. I am a person with a disability. I depend on the Lifeline phone service to contact my care provider and my care provider agency and to get to my doctors' appointments. This is the only phone I have and without it I would basically be shut in. I depend on it for everything everyone else would use their cell phone for. I have to contact my family in case emergency, to contact them to see how they are faring, to keep in communication with my grandchildren, so it is very effective. It is a 9-1-1 service if I need it. It is a crucial service that should stay in the community for those that don't have home phones. I don't know how I would stress that any more but please keep this service available to people in my situation or many others. Any time that I don't have enough food I can call to find out times and locations for local food banks.

Please don't take the service. Thank you.

– Gerri, Seattle

I did use [my Lifeline phone] to get housing. I was homeless. I needed to make phone calls every day and could not afford to because I did not have a job. Then I used it to get a job. My employer calls me on this phone to for my work schedule. It's invaluable to me and has been for work and for housing, to receiving changes with my doctors as far as appointments. I couldn't do without it. I'm very thankful for it. I hope it continues. Thank you.

– Stacy, Seattle

I don't know what I would do without the Lifeline service. I would be almost completely cut off from employers, potential employers, and news about my community. It's hard enough living on little or no income without such basic service as a phone to be able to call 911 if you need help, or to get in touch with community resources or to find a job. There is no way on this earth that the use of Lifeline should be restricted other than just having one Lifeline phone. I don't have any problem with that. But as far as cutting people off from this service, it would make an almost untenable situation impossible. That's what it will do. Those will be the consequences if that is done. Thank you.

- Brandon, Tulsa

I just wanted to inform that Lifeline has helped a lot. It helped me get jobs, help me stay in touch with family members and whatever have you. It's been a really great help and I appreciate it. Thanks a lot.

– Clinton, Seattle

Lifeline has helped me a whole lot finding employment, locating housing, just general staying in touch with doctors, providers, job counselors. It's a great program. I feel you all need to expand this program. Thank you very much.

– Carl, Houston

The Lifeline cell phone that I have has helped me with job searching. I've gone on many interviews because of it cause I have no other way of leaving a number for them to leave me a message about an interview. I haven't got any luck yet, but I'm positive that I will. Thank you.

– Paula, Houston

I have a Lifeline cell phone. It comes in handy for jobs, housing, and emergencies. I think it's very highly important that we can save the Lifeline for the land or cell phone especially when people can't get a hold of you for a job, or housing. It's very, very important. It makes a difference to have a Lifeline. I strongly hope that we can save this and I appreciate it. Thank you very much.

– Tracy, Seattle

It is important that I keep the Lifeline phone because I am homeless right now with my son and it helps my family keep in touch with me, and also for the Housing Connect [program] to get ahold of me at that number. That's why Lifeline is important to me, and I need to keep it for those reasons. Given that I'm homeless and it's the only number I can give to apartments to get ahold of me. I would appreciate it if you could keep the Lifeline going like it is. It means a lot to me. Thank you.

- Stephanie, Seattle

I have Assurance Wireless. I use it for job search and for...everything, you know, food stamps, if anyone needs to contact me I always give them that number, mainly for employers to contact me. Basically that's what I use it for, to try to work towards independence, and gain work and everything by working with agencies I give them that number too. Anyone that needs to reach me. And for emergencies...it's good for emergencies too. Thank you.

- Shirelle, Portland

I have truly appreciated my Lifeline phone. It's an Assurance phone....through the Lifeline phone I do have a job now and it's a number where people can reach me. Texting is a really wonderful benefit where we can write and be quiet at the same time if we're in a meeting or something. I really truly appreciate my Assurance phone and have used it. It would really be a huge change in many people's lives if they did not have it. In mine personally I still use it everyday.

- Janice, Seattle

I'm a senior citizen, very low income, and I would not be able to afford a cell phone or any type of place to receive voice mail messages. So I rely very much on Community Voice Mail and the Lifeline phone service. I would not be able to afford any type of phone whatsoever, so I'd appreciate being able to continue to use the Lifeline cell phone. Thank you.

- Shirley, Seattle

#### Access to Emergency Services and Protection of Health and Safety

I am a customer of the Lifeline service which has turned out to be invaluable to me. I am a disabled vet with MS and frequently have medical issues and need frequent contact with the VA hospital, crisis hotlines, and so forth. I'm on Social Security disability and the Lifeline CAPS program allows me to stay connected to the world because of my disability I can't actually physically get out in the world all that often without extensive preparation. So, Congress, keep the Lifeline program in operation. Find the money. I know you can do it. Thank you.

– John, Seattle

I live in an adult center where several of the women who are disabled have Lifeline landline services, and it has been on more than one occasion life-saving for them to have this. They're on very small fixed-incomes, and the Lifeline service (especially with the landline) has been invaluable. I hope that it will be recognized as a valuable service.

- Patricia, Tulsa

My Lifeline phone has helped me greatly. I'm on disability for depression and suicidal thoughts. And people call on my and check on me and encourage me. I wouldn't be able to afford a regular phone. It wouldn't be possible. I appreciate my lifeline phone.

- Rich, Tulsa

Lifeline services have helped me by providing me with a phone to call police for help when my boyfriend was beating the [----] out of me. If I wouldn't have had that phone I would probably be dead. Thank you.

- Christy, Seattle

Since having a phone I've been able to make calls for doctor appointments, schedule rides to my appointments. I can have other people can contact me. Be able to make 9-1-1 calls. I've had to make 911 calls at least 6 times to get to the ER which is detrimental to my health. Also, Lifeline has been able to help me communicate with family who is outside the state. As far as making calls for service to nonprofits for assistances throughout the month. Without Lifeline all the necessary things I need to do for everyday living would not be easier without it. I know my story is one of many who definitely need Lifeline. Thank you.

– Kimbal, Seattle

I use the Lifeline service and I couldn't access my medical care without it at all. I need it in order to contact my doctors' offices, and to order prescriptions I need the Lifeline service. I have also called 211 for other kinds of social services but the most important is the medical service. This is a service that without which myself or others could run in to problems without access to medical care through the Lifeline service. Thank you very much.

– Gretchen, Seattle

I just think the cell phone program is real good because it helps people be able to make phone calls during emergencies. I just want to make sure you understand that a lot of people who can't afford it have that opportunity with these programs. I support it. I think that people who have cell phones today possibly would not have had a cell phone if it wasn't for this program because the economy and finances and money and things like that, people are just pinched to the limit with how much they can spend and how much is available for them. When Congress passes programs that can put something in your hand like a cell phone or something a lot of people would need it's like a good thing so why stop providing it?

– Marion, Houston

I have a Community Voice Mail and a Lifeline cell phone...Budget Mobile I believe. I need that phone, very much so, because I have a chronic medical condition – to check with my doctors and my pharmacist. I need to contact them always regarding my medical condition. And also my housing – which is Section 8 – I need to stay in contact with the Housing Authority. So please don't cut anything from my Lifeline services. It's a life saver, and I appreciate Congress bearing with me in the understanding. Thank you so much.

- Victor, Seattle

I don't know what I would do without Lifeline because it has helped me with doctor appointments and all the important information. And I need my free voice mail because I'm a victim of domestic violence and I can't give out a phone number. I need a voice mail that's non-traceable, and I'm dead without that. I really hope they don't take that away...it would be really hard without my cell phone. Oh my gosh, I just hope that they don't take it away. Thank you. Bye.

- Nicole, Seattle

Hi, my name's Mike. I'm leaving a message because I don't want to see cutbacks on the phone Lifeline because I use it quite a bit for different things like in case of emergency if I need help. If I need to call my doctors to make appointments. Stay in touch with my family, like my grandkids. And to check on other programs out there like United Way and Solid Ground, and welfare and social security.

- Mike, Seattle

Since I got this [Lifeline phone] it has saved my life, from emergency, from going to the hospital, making my appointments, receiving my appointments, my scheduling, and I really, really love the service and really appreciate whatever the community is doing for us. Without this I'm nobody. And I'm in the job market, so it's my lifeline. Whether it's hospitals, clinics, job line, emergencies, doctor appointments, anything...it helps. And I would really be disappointed if they eliminate or limit my access to these services. Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

- Mike, Houston

I have Assurance Wireless, which really comes in handy because I'm on disability and I really can't afford a regular cell phone service. It has helped me a lot, especially if I have an emergency out on the road or if I'm out at night especially and something comes up. So I'm sure it helps a lot of the homeless people because I used to be homeless too. It's really necessary in this day and age to have a cell phone, especially for homeless people. Because I used to be homeless too, and it was the only way that employers could contact you, and family and friends...it's very, very important that they don't do away with these programs - Assurance and others, Safelink is in this state as well – it would just be a crying shame if they did away with this. Not necessarily for people like me that are off the streets, but it would be too expensive for me to get another phone and cell service...but especially for homeless people, because I've been there and I knew what it felt like not to have a phone and have to go into places, go into hospitals, borrow the phone everywhere we could...it was very very difficult.

- Sherri, Houston